

SOUTH CUMBRIA MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

GREENGATE JUNIOR AND RAMSDEN INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOLS' PROPOSAL TO JOIN SCMAT



RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING 15/5/2024

Below are questions that were asked as part of the consultation process and responded to by Greengate Junior and Ramsden Infant and Nursery Headteacher Sue Jackson, SCMAT CEO Professor Andrew Wren and SCMAT school member headteachers Mick Cull (Ormsgill) and David Holmes (Vickerstown) as part of the public meeting on May 15th 2024.

Q: When schools academise will there be structure and merger changes within the schools?

SJ – There are no plans to make changes in the foreseeable future.

AW - The Trust rarely has involvement in structural changes in individual schools.

Q: When staff move into an academy, does their length of service start again? What about redundancy and moving up the pay scale?

AW - Length of service stays the same.

SJ - We wouldn't be sat here if that was the case. I wouldn't be joining if it affected length of service.

Q: If staff left the MAT and went back to LA, staff might have to start again and need some clarification on the 'bigger network of experts'.

AW - We adhere to the same pay and conditions as the LA. You can opt out if an academy but this seldom happens and is certainly not the case at SCMAT. Example of improved pay and conditions was Chetwynde, who are now on aligned pay and conditions. Bigger network of experts comes from within the Trust. We can buy in network of support and work closely with other Trusts to share resources and expertise.

Q: Pay and conditions are the same at the point of transfer but this can change, as in all employers.

MC - I can confirm that it is an accessible network of support. Also, hefty salaries are claimed by directors for the LA and yet I have never met anyone high up in the LA. Senior leaders of the MAT know Ormsgill inside out.

AW - It is a choice and our schools have not been sponsored to join. Good schools are choosing to academise and I will always be grateful to the initial schools who chose to academise and with this others schools followed. Unsolicited approaches to schools by SCMAT don't happen.

SJ - This has taken me two years to come to this decision. I've spoken with lots of heads, trusts and the LA and had lots of reassurance that we can work together. I've talked to staff at both schools. We are one of the last schools to join. If I thought it wasn't right for the schools, I wouldn't be doing it. The school will be secure.

Q: If they want to change pay policies, they can. Do people have to declare £100,000?

AW – SLT salaries are published in academy financial statements.

Q: What percentage is paid to the Trust by the schools? Covers submitted question: *How much will SCMAT take from each schools budget to pay for central services - as a percentage and an actual amount?*

AW – the Trust’s policy is 6% in year one, 5% in year two and then 4% thereafter. The actual amount is dependent on the budget for that year.

Q: Will GAG need to be increased?

AW - Forecast is more sustainable if 3 or 4 schools join in a year. Central services team is more cost effective with more schools. More personnel would be needed to support further schools but there are better economies of scale and we are now reaching this point. The three-year budget is favourable.

Q: An education improvement advisor over nine schools is that feasible? Will it need increasing?

AW - There is a meeting to discuss putting more resources in. I have my own central service team. It needs to be a better service than what the LA offers.

Q: Finance question about the school fund. Do the academy audit it? Do we need to seek permission to spend? Do you allow schools to spend on resources, can I use the school credit card?

MC - A paper trail is needed clearly.

AW - Budget holder will give permission and there are no limitations on being able to do that. We do not take autonomy away from schools.

Q: Professional Network Groups- do they get paid as a TLR?

MC - If a member of staff is going through threshold, they will help support the subsequent area.

DH - All staff are benefitting from the leadership opportunities

Q: Is it down to school how they use high needs funding? Will joining affect any of the work with children with SEN and how the children receive support? Covers submitted question: *How (if at all) would this affect any children with Special Education Needs? Would this change how any child’s support is given?*

AW – No changes. The Trust is fully supportive of the RP and AP as this is giving the children the best opportunities.

SJ - I want reassurance that the process will be led by my team. We have the expertise and as you know, I firmly believe in inclusion.

AW - The Governing body will give you reassurance. The Trustees are supportive and will visit.

Q: Performance related pay question. Government doesn’t want PRP. Teachers should move up due to length in service not targets.

SJ - I can see the benefits of PRP. However, I hope the Government add funding to schools to cover it.

AW - Merger: The proposal is for the two schools to join next term and, after academisation then merge, if approved. This will be done in a short timescale. Governing body need to consult with staff and parents.

Q: How will a merger impact upon the staffing at Greengage and Ramsden Infants, with particular reference to leadership and support staffing?

The school has just undergone a staffing review and there re are no plans to make any further changes.

Q: Do you observe lessons as an academy?

DH - Andrew gets into schools but doesn't formally observe. We are in the Ofsted window and the Trust's Education Advisor has been a great support. We really appreciate it.

MC - Subject leaders observe not done from above.

Q: If we academise and AW left, can we opt out?

AW - You cannot be an academy on your own.

DD - The trust is built on your ethos and values. If you decided to move on, how would your job be carried on?

MC - Values are lived on a day-to-day basis.